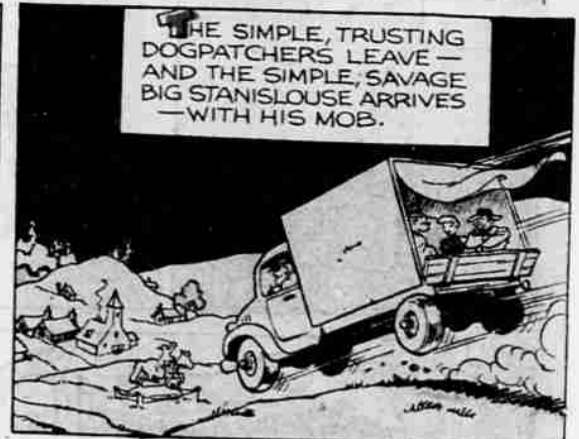


# LIL' ABNER

Cornpone Rides Again!!

by AL CAPP



Our Story: PRINCE VALIANT RIDES INTO BASTARDY UNCHALLENGED, A BAD SQUAD. THIS MEANS THAT HE IS EXPECTED; THAT A WARNING HAS GONE AHEAD AND HE WILL BE UNDER SUSPICION.



ALFRED IS TREATED WITH CONTEMPT, EVEN GETTING CUFFED FOR HIS CLUMSINESS. FOR HE MUST ACT THE PART OF A DESPISED SERF THAT HE MAY BE ACCEPTED AMONG THE LOWLY SERVANTS.



FOR IT IS ONLY IN THE SCULLERY AND THE STABLES THAT GOSSIP IS UNGUARDED. THE SERF KNOWS NO LOYALTY TO A BRUTAL MASTER, AND ALFRED CAN ASK FOR THE INFORMATION HE WANTS.



VAL SINCERELY BELIEVES THAT ALL CHRISTIAN KNIGHTS SHOULD MAKE THE PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND, SO HE SPEAKS WITH CONVICTION. WHO WOULD SUSPECT THIS DEDICATED PALMER OF BEING A SPY?



WOLF RAGNOR HAS HEARD OF HIS GUEST'S DEXTERITY WITH THE SWORD. HE MAKES AN OFFER: "WE CAN USE GOOD FIGHTING MEN. STAY WITH US AND WE WILL GIVE YOU CONQUEST AND RICHES!"



VAL WOULD LIKE TO ASK WHO IS TO BE CONQUERED AND LOOTED, BUT HE MERELY SAYS: "THANK YOU, SIRE, BUT MY SWORD IS DRAWN ONLY IN SELF-DEFENSE OR IN A RIGHTEOUS CAUSE. TOMORROW I LEAVE, GOING WESTWARD IN THE HOPE OF REACHING IRELAND."



"A MESSENGER RODE WESTWARD TONIGHT, AND I HEAR TALES OF TERROR AND OF A MADMAN, WHO RULES THERE!"



NEVERTHELESS, AT DAWN THEY RIDE AWAY ON THE LAST AND MOST PERILOUS LEG OF THEIR QUEST.

NEXT WEEK—The Smiling Monarch.